Preſervation from impending Judgments, a forcible Argument for Humiliation, and Amendment of Life; which is the beſt Thankſgiving unto GOD.

A

SERMON

Preached at

Wisbeech in the Iſle of *Ely*,

Februrary 21. 1713.

Being the *Sunday* following the great Tempeſt of *Wind* and *Rage of Sea*; which happen'd the 15th Day, to the great Peril of the Town, and Country, and their conſiderable Damage.

By ELISHA SMITH, M. A.
Lecturer of *Wisbeech*.

Publiſh'd at the Requeſt of ſeveral Hearers.

To which is added,

An *APPENDIX*, giving an Account of a Monumental Inſcription in the ſaid Church, commemorating Two former Inundations of the Town, and Country around.

London Printed, and ſold by *John Morphew* near *Stationers-hall*. 1714.

Price 3 *d*.

A

SERMON

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Wisbech in the Isle of Ely,

February 21. 1713.

By ELISHA SMITH, M. A.

Lecturer of Wisbech.

Publish'd at the Request of several Hearers.

London Printed, and sold by John Hopkins near Stationers Hall. 1714.

Price 4d.

TO THE

HONOURABLE

WILLIAM FEILDING,

My very Worthy and most Honoured

PATRON,

As a Publick Testimony of

GRATITUDE,

THIS

DISCOURSE

Is humbly

INSCRIBED and DEDICATED,

BY HIS

Most obliged, and

Most sincerely devoted

Humble Servant,

E. Smith.

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TO THE

INHABITANTS

OF

Wisbeech, St. *Peter*, and St. *Mary*,

IN THE

ISLE of *ELY*.

AS by the *Bleſſings of Heaven*, the *Advantage of Situation*, and your own *Induſtry*, you highly deſerve the *Fame of a flouriſhing People in* Temporal *Circumſtances*; *I moſt heartily wiſh and intend you alſo to exceed others in that* Spiritual *Proſperity, which I am in Station bound to promote. If ye were ſo much affected with the enſuing Argument, which endeavour'd (in that ſudden Emergency) to*

enforce

enforce the ſtricter Pleaſing of GOD, *and more careful Practice of Religion from ſuch an univerſally acknowledged Neceſſity of ſo doing, provided your* Temporal Preſervation *likewiſe moſt eminently depends upon it, as to wiſh the Publication, and judge it more effectual for your own Conviction, and the probable Good of others; I ſhou'd be guilty of being wanting to an Opportunity of furthering your more laſting Advantage, if, under modeſt Pretences, I had deny'd you, and ſuppreſs'd it.*

I would alſo, when I ſpeak more publickly, acknowledge to the World, the Favours and Civilities I have received from you.

May this Diſcourſe have a durable Impreſſion for the Benefit of your Souls, is the ſincere Prayer, and only Aim, of

Your Faithful Affectionate

Servant in the Lord,

JOHN

JOHN V. 14.

Sin no more, leſt a worſe Thing happen unto thee.

THESE are the Words of our Saviour to one, for whom he had wrought a wonderful Deliverance, by healing him of an inveterate Infirmity of Body, of no leſs than 38 Years ſtanding; which at laſt brought him to that Degree of Weakneſs, and Deſpair of Amendment from Humane Means, that nothing but a *Miracle* cou'd relieve him from it. In this Expectation he repairs to the Pool of *Bethesda*; a Water which, ſome time before the Coming of our Saviour, ſeems to have been (emblematically of *Him*, the true *Water of* Shiloh, *and Fountain of Living Waters*) endued with a miraculous Virtue of healing Diſeaſes; communicated to it at certain Times by an *Angel*. But this poor Criple, by reaſon of his Weakneſs, which had brought him ſo low as to confine him to his Bed, not being able to get in time enough to receive the ſalutary Benefit, was continually diſappointed of the Cure, by ſome or other ſtepping in before him; and this being like to be always his Caſe, by reaſon of his Inability to help himſelf, there ſeem'd nothing elſe for him to expect, but ſpeedily to periſh under his Diſtemper. In this deplorable Condition, when all other Help failed, either from Man, or Angel, One greater than both, our *Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, came unto his Cure; takes Compaſſion on him; and, with a Word, ſpeaks him well upon

Iſa. xviii. 6. Jer. ii. 13.

his

his Legs, and into an Ability to carry that Bed, which before bore him in a languiſhing Condition. In a grateful Senſe of this great Deliverance, he goes up to the Temple, to offer his Sacrifice of Praiſe and Thankſgiving for this wonderful great Mercy ſhewn unto him. Where our Lord finding him, reminds him of the Perſonal Iniquity which brought the Puniſhment of his late Diſtemper upon him; kindly admoniſhing him, in the Words of the Text, *Sin no more, leſt a worſe Thing happen unto thee.*

This is the Occaſion of theſe Words: And, I hope, I ſhall not ſtand in need of an Apology, if I apply them, at this time, to ourſelves; and make that Advantage of them, as to enforce the Duty of the Text, from the Conſideration of the Eminent *Deliverance* we have receiv'd from the Mercy of God unto us, whilſt the Impreſſion thereof is freſh upon us.

For ſure, (if we conſider aright) it is as great an Inſtance of God's Mercy, to ſuſpend, and forbear, the Execution of an impending *Judgment*, juſt approaching to break in upon us, and which our Sins ſo hugely deſerv'd, as to have wrought us a ſeaſonable Removal of the inflicted Calamity. This reſtored *Impotent*, 'tis true, in the 13th Verſe of this Chapter, at firſt, *wiſt not who it was that had healed him.* But, I hope, upon ſecond Thoughts, we ſhall all of us know, who it was that preſerv'd us; and ſhall alſo acknowledge it, with due Thankfulneſs and Obedience, to the Lord our God: Underſtanding the Greatneſs of His Favour from our own Unworthineſs of it; and yet our Liableneſs to much worſe Things, if the threatned Vengeance has not its intended Effect upon us, to divert the greater Wrath of God againſt us, and our Land.

How, few Days ago, did our Hearts begin to gather Fear at the *Diſtreſs of Waters*, which thruſt ſore at us?

1 Kings viii. 45. Was not the Heaven alſo, at the ſame time, black with Wind? and we not a little damag'd in our Edifices, and Effects, abroad? But what was more valuable, in the Loſs of (one) Life, and the extreme danger of another! Many other Loſſes we have heard of from elſewhere *; and more may be, unknown unto us.

---

* *London, Edinburgh*, and all the *Northern* Coaſt; Inundation in *Eſſex, Holland, Hamburgh.*

Nay

Nay, at the ſame inſtant, were not the *Sparks* of God's Anger about to kindle (as we were alarm'd by the *Bell* *,) in a Third Element of *Fire*? Which, had it flam'd out in the Circumſtances of ſuch a Rage of Wind, and ſuch a Quarter of the Town, muſt have conſum'd our Dwellings, as in a Moment †. Nor wou'd the other, then *Adverſary*, the *Water*, (which, in ſuch Caſes, is wont to be a Friend) been able to have aſſiſted, but wou'd have *forgot* its *quenching Nature*, and its Service to extinguiſh. But as this was not ſo palpable, I ſhall ſpeak only at preſent of the Two former, which did more ſenſibly and apparently threaten us. Wiſd. xix. 20.

And in them, the good God, who *in Judgment remembers Mercy*, juſt ſhew'd us the Rod, and put it up again; He ſtopt His Hand ſhort *in the inſtant*; He was going to chaſtiſe us very terribly: And in hopes that the Apprehenſion of ſuch viſible Strokes, wou'd do as much good upon us, as the *Feeling*; He juſt preſented to our Fears the Vengeance we deſerv'd to have felt, *had He ſuffer'd His whole Diſpleaſure to ariſe*. For the *Blaſt of Wind*, which untyl'd, diſrooted, or any ways impair'd our Buildings, or Plantations; had it been ſtronger, might have level'd 'em with the Ground, and maſh'd us in the Ruin: Had the Lord been pleas'd to have given more Force to the *Tyde*, (no ſtrange thing in this Country) it might have laid our *Banks* flat, and drowned the *Level* round *: And we, amidſt the reſt, wou'd have become a Pool of Water; our numerous Cattle ſwimming for their Lives; and, probably, many of us likewiſe: And *Fiſh* might have been, this Day, in the Houſe of the Lord inſtead of ourſelves. For, did we not, in ſtrict Juſtice, merit the Judgment ſpoken of in (*Wiſd.* v. 22, 23?) *The Water of the Sea ſhould rage againſt us, and the Floods cruelly drown us; and, like a Storm, blow us away*: That thus, and in this manner, our *Iniquity and Ill-dealing ſhould lay waſte, and over-throw us*. But, praiſed be His Mercy and Compaſſion! It was of the Lord's *Mercies* and *Compaſſion, which failed not*, at that Juncture, that our Houſes, and the Stuff in them, our Lands, and the *Stock* on them, were not made the *Spoil of the Sea*. *Whoſo then is wiſe, will ponder theſe Things, and they ſhall underſtand* this *Loving-kindneſs of the Lord*, Pſal. cvii. 43.

---

* *Fire-Bell.*

† The Town of *Holt*, in *Norfolk*, about five Years ago, burnt down in four Hours time, and in a leſſer Wind.

* *Vid.* Appendix.

The Order I ſhall recommend to you, to think of theſe Things, ſhall be,

Firſt, To conſider the Judgment of the *Wind*, as being the Cauſe of the other chief Threatning from the *Sea*: Whilſt *both the Wind and the Sea obey'd Him*, who rul'd over us.

Secondly, What Obligations, and Returns, ſuch a Preſervation lays us under.

Firſt, As to the *Wind*. We ſhou'd be far from ſtopping at *Second Cauſes*, in any unuſual and awakening Event; much leſs in this: But rather, like pious *Job*, and like Divine Philoſophers, referr it to the Creator of Winds, and firſt Cauſe of all Things; and as he aſcrib'd it to nothing but the *Hand of God*, (tho', we are told, the *Devil* was the immediate Occaſion of the *Wind*) when it came out of the Wilderneſs, and blew down the Houſe, where his Sons and Daughters were feaſting, and overwhelm'd them in the Ruins; ſo ought we to impute all Effects of the ſame, whether particularly beneficial, or miſchievous unto us, to the ſame directing Power. The natural Riſe and certain Cauſe of Winds, is yet a Secret, paſt the Diſcoveries of the Inquirers into Nature, to find out. Whether they ariſe from the Preſſure and Subſidence of the Vapours of the *Atmoſphere* *, or ſecret Caverns in the Earth; or Vapours from the Earth, or Sea; or elſe from the Effects of Cold and Heat, rarifying the Air in one Place, and condenſing it in another, and ſo changing the calm Balance and Equipoiſe of the *Atmoſphere*, produces thoſe Currents of the Fluid from one Place to another, is all little more than Conjecture; and moſt probably, the true Origin thereof will always be unknown to the Sons of Men; as it is intimated by the *Maker* of 'em, in His Holy Revelations. Wherein it is written, *That He bringeth the Wind out of His Pleaſure*, that *it bloweth where it liſteth*; and we, who *hear the Sound thereof*, *know not whence it cometh, or whither it goeth*; that *the Lord gathereth and keepeth them in His Fiſt*: And that *the Breath of God from the South, or North*, East, or Weſt, *is turned round about by His Counſels*; *that they may do whatever He commanderh*, *He cauſeth it to come, whether for Correction, or for His Land, or for Mercy*. And in *Ver.* 23. of the ſame Chapter of *Job*, it is ſaid in this reſpect, *that we cannot find out the Almighty*; but that *He is excellent in Power, and in Judgment, and in Plenty of Juſtice He will not afflict*. So that all they,

Job i. 19.

Pſal. cxxxv. 7.

John iii. 8.

Prov. xxx. 4.

Job xxxvii. 12, &c.

* Mr. *Hobbes*'s Opinion.

who

who think no higher than Chance, or Second Causes, in this Matter, forget the Main-Spring of all, the superintending Providence of God: Which, if it takes Care and Charge over the minuteſt Things, as *the Falling of Sparrows, and Numbering the Hairs of our Head*, if we will believe our Saviour, *Matth.* x. 29, 30. We may be very certain, that greater Concerns, and Changes of ours, are more peculiarly ſubjected to His Ordering; and that *no Evil happens* to us, in the Field, or on Shipboard, *or in the City*, but proceeds from His eſpecial Direction and Appointment. The very *Heathen* cou'd direct us to look up to God, and adore Him in this Particular of the Winds; *Ventis ſpirantibus ſonum adora, divinæ Sapientiæ Argumentum*, is one of the *Symbols* which *Jamblicus* mentions of *Pythagoras*. Am. iii. 6.

It is foreign to the Buſineſs of my preſent Diſcourſe, to ſpeak of the Benefit of *Winds*, which are very many, and exceeding neceſſary; but only of the Miſchief and Effects of them, when God is angry with us. Who can, of a ſudden, convert that, which is the greateſt Good to us, into the greateſt Calamity, by *driving us, like Chaff and Stubble, before it, and cauſing the Wind to eat up our Pleaſures.* So may the wide Sea alſo, from whence ariſeth our Riches, eaſily, at a Beck, turn to our Poverty and Deſtruction, if God, from a Friend, becomes an Enemy. *The Winds and the Storms* are expreſly ſaid, *to ariſe for the fulfilling His Word*; *That His Way is in the Whirlwind, and in the Storm* (Nah. i. 3.) *That He maketh the Clouds His Chariot-Wheels, and rides upon the Wings of the Wind*: And elſewhere the Pſalmiſt, *Make them* afraid *with Thy Storm, that Men may know, that Thou, whoſe Name is* Jehovah, *art the moſt Higheſt over all the Earth*: That it is *He who cauſeth the Winds to blow, and the Waters flow*: That, *at His Word, the ſtormy Wind ariſeth, and liftеth up the Waves* of the Sea: And again, That it is He who *maketh the Storm to ceaſe, ſo that the Waves thereof are ſtill.* And therefore, after ſo many Declarations, it muſt be great Impiety, or Ignorance, in any Perſon to imagine, that Witches, or Sorcerers, have any Power over this Element; or that the *Devil* himſelf, their Patron, (tho' *Prince of the Power of the Air*) hath any Authority but what God deputes, reſtrains, and permits, upon ſpecial Commiſſions and Occaſion. No; theſe furious Winds are certainly the *Blaſt of God's Diſpleaſure*; *And who*, (as the *Pſalm* aſks) *can ſtand in His Sight, when He is angry?* Not our Houſes themſelves, not their Owners, are able. It is He who raiſeth, and He that *ſtayeth the rough Wind*; He encourages, and He *rebukes* it at His Pſal. i. 4. --- lxxxiii. 13. Jer. xxii. 22. Pſal. cxlviii. 8. --- civ. 3. --- lxxxiii. 15, 18. --- cxlvii. 18. Iſa. xxvii. 8. Matth. viii. 26.

His Heavenly Pleaſure. Therefore ought we to live in in the Fear and Reverence of Him, who is thus able to deſtroy us with the Breath of His Mouth. *When He is angry*, [mark the Conſequence] *the Springs of Water are ſeen, at the Chiding of the Lord, at the Blaſting of the Breath of His Diſpleaſure; His Breath becomes as an overflowing Stream; and the Pouring out of His Wrath like Water, a Ruſhing Mighty One: For behold*, (as in the Words of *Jer.* xlvii. 2.) *Waters did riſe up out of the* North, *and ſhall be an overflowing Flood, and ſhall overflow the Land.* Did they not riſe to us out of the ſame Quarter*? And the Effects of it was to us-ward, *That the Waters of the Sea had cover'd us, the proud Waves had well nigh gone over our Soul*, Pſal. cxxiv. 4. 5.

Iſa. xxx. 28. Hoſ. v. 10. Iſa. xvii. 12.

This was the Second; and greater Peril we were in from the Sea.

And this our Country always has been, and will be, liable to the peculiar Dread of, even that, from whence flows our Wealth. Our Dwelling, like unto that of the Tribe of *Zabulon*, is *at the Haven of the Sea*; and, like them, are we capable of being *afflicted by the Way of the Sea*, and ſuffer under the *Rod of God from thence*. We pretty much reſemble the Inhabitants, the Prophet *Nahum* (iii. 8.) mentions, *Whoſe Rampart is the Sea, and who are ſituate among the Rivers*; and at the 15th Verſe, *whoſe Merchants are multiplyed.*

Gen. xlix. 13. Iſa. x. 25.

Tho' *God has placed the Sand for the Bounds of the Sea*, yet our Predeceſſors, very probably, as long ago as the Days of the *Romans*, according to the beſt Accounts of Draining, and the Antiquity thereof†: They began (if I may ſo ſay) to tranſgreſs and encroach upon thoſe Boundaries ſet of God. We confeſs and adore, in our daily Devotions, *that the Sea is His, and that He hath made it; and His Hands have prepared the dry Land*; and we call to one another, in the Senſe thereof, *to worſhip, and fall down, and kneel before Him.* Our Country and Level is (as it were) borrow'd, and carv'd out of the Sea, by the commendable Induſtry of Men; and by their Art *it is founded upon the Floods.* In ancient Days, the *Shrimp*, and the *Eel*, the *Butt* and *Plaice*, the *Smelts*, and the *Cod*, &c. very likely, took their Paſtime in our *Market-place*, where now they are brought to be ſold, and to be eaten. But, what is the Art or Fences of Men againſt God, when He inveſts His Waters with a Power to demoliſh, in order to puniſh us? Shou'd the

Jer. v. 22. Pſal. xcv.

* North-Wind.

† Vid. *Dugdale's* Hiſtory of Draining, *p.* 16. and Sir *Tho. Brown's Poſthum.* Works, his Letters to Sir *William Dugdale*,

Sea

Sea come up again, it comes but to claim its ancient Rights and Boundaries, and take that *Loan* of Land away from us, which He continues to us upon our good Behaviour. God can bring a Tempeſt, at a Time when we look not, and deſtroy our Subſtance in the Overflowings of Anger, and thereby diſſolve and corrupt 'em, as in a *Hemp-Ditch* *. *Job* ſpeaks by Experience, in *Chap.* xxvii. 19, *&c. how Terrors take hold on the rich Man, like Waters; a Tempeſt ſtealeth him away in the Night, the Eaſt-Wind carrieth him away, and he departeth, and, as a Storm, hurleth him out of his Place.* As He permitted the *Sea to be turn'd into dry Land*, ſo again, for the Wickedneſs of the People, can He cauſe our Land to return to its Original. In the literal Phraſe of the Prophet, our *Breach*, once *as wide as the Sea, was* happily *repair'd again.*

" O God! we have heard with our Ears, and our Fa-
" thers have declar'd unto us, the noble Works which
" Thou didſt in their Days, and in the Old Time before
" them."

The Monument in the Chancel of this Church, records and declares to your Eyes †, that 100 Years, and about three Months ago, both the *North* and the *South-ſide* of this Town, *&c.* was over-flow'd. And again, the Year following, the like Calamity befel the *South-ſide* thereof, *&c.* to the Loſs of ſome *Lives*, and of *Goods*, *Corn*, and *Cattle*; ſo great, and ſo many Sufferers, that it cou'd not be eſtimated. The *Cry of it*, to be ſure, *was very great*; as had been the Cry of their Sins before God. Jer. xlvii. 8.

— Is it, becauſe we are more righteous than they, that we have eſcap'd the eminent Danger, which they ſuffer'd the Infliction of?

— I would to God, I ſhou'd ſay true, in ſaying we are! — I am ſure of ſpeaking a Truth, if I exhort you all to apprehend, that God has been much kinder and indulgent to *us*, than He was unto *them*.

Behold, ſays the Apoſtle, *Rom.* xi. 22. *the Goodneſs and Severity of God, upon them which feel Severity! but to thee, Goodneſs, if thou continue in that Goodneſs; otherwiſe thou ſhalt be cut off.* How good was He, in preferring to exhibit Mercy rather than Judgment? that He might melt and captivate us into better Obedience, by the Expreſſion of ſo much Kindneſs; and that, by Lenity and gentle Means, in the very Sight of harſher and terrible ones, He might

* Of which, Plenty in the Country. † *Vid.* Appendix.

not

not fail to induce Amendment of what is displeasing in His Sight, and a Performance of our Duties with greater Care unto Him.

For this it was; He drew in His Arm, stretched out against us; and *when the Sea saw that, it fled*, and retired into its Bounds, tho' it roared sore to come at us: But, because He had a Favour unto us, He muzzled it, that it shou'd not devour; that we being rescued out of its Jaws, might become *a peculiar People zealous of good Works*. He may justly say unto us, it was *not thy Righteousness* that preserv'd thee; but because He wou'd make the Power of His Goodness to be known and confess'd amongst us; and by the fresh Endearment of so general a Preservation, added to all His Loving-kindnesses, He might engage us, so greatly oblig'd, to a permanent Thanksgiving in our Lives, to more Fear, and Love, of His Great and Holy Name, and a constant Sentiment of His Protection, and Inspection over us, and our Affairs.

The reigning Vices, which the Minister of this Parish records on the said *Monument* *, in those Days of Vengeance, as the Cause which pull'd it down, and broke the *Banks*, are these following.

Impietas, Fraudes, Scortatio, Fœnus. *Drunkenness* is not mention'd among the rest: From whence, I observe, it was not in fashion in those Days. But *Impiety* there was, *Fraud*, and *Cheating*, *Adultery*, *Whoredom*, and *Lasciviousness*; (*Scortatio*, in a Poetical Sense, may import all three.) — Were these Sins and Provocations only in those Times? Are they not now also? — I fear, we, the Children, have taken after our Parents, as they after theirs, and have, by this time, pretty well improv'd, rather than fallen short, in Viciousness. If *Usury* is not practised as much now as then, 'tis because the Laws of the Land have since restrain'd its Exorbitancy. I dare say, however, the *Love of Money* declines not at all, but continues to be the *Root* of as much, if not more *Evil*, to this very Day.

And as our Wealth has encreased, so, I suspect, have our Sins too, among the generality of the Prosperous. And to our other Abominations, instead of amending, we have added the peculiar Sins of wealthy Places. Particularly of *Tyrus*, a rich Sea-Port, which, in *Ezekiel*, is represented, like ourselves, to be inhabited *by Sea-faring Men*, and *to be a Merchant of People*; *and that her Wares went forth out of the Seas, and filled many People*: The Accusation is in

Ezek. xxvi. 17. xxvii. 3, 33.

* *Vid.* Appendix.

Chap.

Chap. xxviii. 5. *That by Traffick it had encreased its Riches, and its Heart was lifted up because of its Riches*: As we are very like in these Particulars, God grant we may not resemble also in the Judgment spoke of against it. *Behold I when shall become desolate, and uninhabited, when I shall bring up the Deep upon thee, and great Waters shall cover thee; when I shall bring thee down into the Pit, and shall set thee in Place, desolate of old.* And again, *Chap.* xxvii. 26, 27. *The East-Wind hath broken thee in the midst of the Seas*; (and that, by the by, in a Wind we are in danger from the Violence of;) *Thy Riches, and thy Fairs*, thy Merchandize, thy Mariners, and thy Pilots that are in thee, and all thy Company which is in the midst of thee, shall fall into the midst of the Seas, in the Day of thy Ruin.* Ezek. xxvi. 19, &c.

Lord, in Thy Mercy, and in Remembrance of Thy past Deliverance, avert this Threatning also from overtaking us! That it may never come to pass, that *Wisbeech* shall be laid waste, or that any, *who hear the Bruit thereof, shou'd clap their Hands over us*, and say, *alas!* But that we, the Inhabiters thereof, may so learn to hear and fear these Denunciations, as to prevent their Execution, by Repentance, and Newness of Life; that we may enjoy *the Blessing* of this our *good Land*, (a very Land of *Goshen* for Pasture;) and may *reap the Fruits of our Labour*; becoming *like the Tree planted by the Water-side, our Leaf not withering, and whatever we do, prospering*. Nah. iii. 19.

The more we have deserv'd the temporal Effects of God's Indignation, the more certainly does it magnify His tender Compassions, in sparing and respiting us: *For He is not willing that any should perish, but that all shou'd come to Repentance.* But know this, if we do go on to despise His *Goodness, Long-Suffering*, and *Forbearance*, and forget to be duly sensible of it, in turning unto Him, we only *treasure up Wrath against the Day of Wrath*, and incurr the greater Condemnation: And, for the like Reasons, it was threatned to the *Jews*, in case of Non-improvement under lesser Judgments of God, we may expect it *to be seven times greater.* — It is very disagreeable to me, to find Occasions of blaming what my very Office justifies me in so doing, *viz.* in order either to *Correction* of what is amiss, or *Edification in Righteousness.* — Tho' I freely applaud the regular Attendance of so many of you at Church, on *Sundays*; yet I cou'd wish, that none staid away, and that the Reverence and Behaviour of every one who comes, was suitable to the Holy Place; yet, I can't but blame very highly, Numb. xxvi. 18.

* Three in a Year at *Wisbeech*.

the

the Reſort of ſo many to *Ale houſes*, or *Taverns*, after Sermon: Where they quench good Motions, and waſh down the Impreſſions of Spiritual Things, with the needleſs, unſeaſonable, (and on ſuch Day) *illegal Drink* of the Fleſh *, and where, alas! 'tis to be fear'd, that the Devil conſtantly cheats them, and pulls up the good Seed which was ſown, by making their Hearts, like their Bellies, a Thorough-fare to Senſe, and a Stage of worldly Acting and Diſcourſe. How deſtructive muſt it be to the Souls of thoſe Labourers and Toilers all the Week, to indulge that Day moſt to Senſe, which ſhou'd be dedicated to the Spirit, and the One Thing neceſſary, the Salvation of their Immortal Souls? And what an unprofitable, conſumptive Gain muſt that be alſo to the *Hoſt*, which is extracted out of Mens Vices?

Tho' the Spirit of Chriſtianity, and a Senſe of Duty to their Saviour, and Hopes of their own Eternal Benefit, brings many (and it is to be preſum'd, upon no worſe Motives) to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper: Yet, do not more than half our People, who are *qualify'd*, ſtay away, even upon the ſolemn Days?

And, out of ſuch Numbers of People, how thin alſo is our Church at the Prayers, twice a Day? Yet, how many Perſons of Leiſure might come to join us, but do not, or very ſeldom, who are detain'd by little or no neceſſary Buſineſs? I dare be poſitive, none worthy to ſtand in competition with that of worſhipping God daily in publick.

Should I ſay, there is too great a Neglect of Family-Prayer, which is (as I may compare) the *Groundſil* of the Building of Religion, and moſt exceeding neceſſary, and ſubſervient to all that are in Family, towards their Entrance in at the *Door of Salvation*. Or if I affirm,

That we much neglect our private Prayers, and Devotions; without which, there can be no due Senſe of a God above, nor of our Relation to, and Dependence on Him: Should I ſay,

That our Improvements in Godlineſs, come vaſtly ſhort of keeping pace with the Means of Grace.

Anſwer me, *Friends and Neighbours*, do I judge much amiſs? — Do I rebuke much amiſs, in ſaying, that the † Drunkard, and Swearer, Lyar, effeminate Perſon, covetous Worldling, and Cheat, are not wholly baniſh'd from among us? And, which makes it ten times worſe, few are ſenſible of theſe Failings in themſelves; they can pre-

* *Vid.* Statutes; Licence of *Ale-Houſes*. † A very populous Place.

ſently

ſently diſcover them in their Neighbour *ſuch a one*, but are blind enough as to themſelves; — *Shall I praiſe ye in theſe things? I praiſe ye not.*

Now, one wou'd have thought, it had been *time for God to work, and to lay to His Hand*, (as the *Pſalm* inferrs in this Caſe,) *when Men had* thus *made void His Law*; *yea, that the Time had been come.* Pſal. cxix. 126.

But, ſee and wonder at the Lenity of our God, in thinking upon Mercy, when we deſerv'd *Inundation!* And remembring Preſervation at the Moment His Judgments were at hand to ſwallow us up; and to puniſh us in that tender Part, our Subſtance and Effects, which we ſo much ſet our Hearts upon, and without which, thou'd think, our Lives wou'd do us little good.

One Circumſtance of the Lord's wiſe ordering, for our Good, ought never to be forgot. For had the ſtormy Wind (vaſtly more dangerous to us, from the Point it blew, than that great Tempeſt about Ten Years ſince,) met the *Height* of the Tyde, how many Feet higher * muſt it have rais'd the Water, and overflow'd us in our Land, and in our Houſes? But it happening, as it did, at the firſt putting in of the *Spring-Tyde*, we were reſcued a few Days from inevitable Inundation.

What ſhall we do unto the Lord for all theſe Benefits He hath done unto us? Only let us comply with the Deſigns of His *great Mercy*, and gratefully conſider in the *Second* Place, What Obligations and Returns it lays us all under.

That God did thus graciouſly reſpite the Puniſhment of our Sins, and not put His impending Severity in Execution, was, becauſe He wou'd not ſurprize us into Confuſion and Deſtruction, but give us more time to reflect upon ourſelves, referring it to our own Reaſon and Gratitude, to inferr from thence the neceſſary as well as decent Return of a general and ſpeedy Amendment of what we have *done amiſs*, and the *Improvement* in the *good* we are any of us wanting in. Why art thou ſo careleſs, O thou wicked Soul! and why art thou ſo unconcern'd within thee?

For, be we every one aſſured, that the Lord God's Indignation has ceaſed only conditionally, and will return again in the *double Fury* of *abuſed Patience*, if we grow not better.

For our own Sakes, let us *drink Iniquity* no more *like Water*, leſt God make us *drink deep of the Cup of His Wrath*, which He but juſt now held up to our Mouths: There is

* The common Difference betwixt the *Firſt* of the *Spring* and the *Height*, 8 Feet Water.

plenty of *Water* always near at hand, and of *Wind* too; yet, He has ſtore and variety of Judgments in His Treaſures. Remember what is threatned (*Lev.* xxvi. 16.) to the Diſobedience of a People, *viz.* the *Conſumption, the burning Ague; a ſowing Seed in vain, without reaping.* And, in *Hoſ.* ii. 9. *The deſtroying of Corn, Wool, and Flax, by the Blite, or Mildew, by the Hail, or Blaſting.* Can't theſe Things affect our Circumſtances *? — Or, can't they too, e'er long, eaſily come upon us, (notwithſtanding one Storm is blown over,) if we continue in our Diſobedience? Neither has the Almighty abſolv'd us wholly from the former Judgments; they are only delayed, to ſee whether we wou'd unanimouſly ſeek to Him to be *abſolv'd from our Sins*, by a Confeſſion, and forſaking of them. God only ſtands by, to hearken, and ſee, as the Prophet *Jeremiah* (viii. 6.) repreſents him, in this Caſe; *I hearkened, and heard,* (ſays God,) *but they ſpake not right*; [*i. e.* they ſtill go on with their Slander, and Backbiting, and ſome with blaſphemous Oaths and Curſes, in trivial diſcourſe, ſtill tear in pieces that *Holy Name* which preſerv'd them from Deſtruction;] *neither did any Man repent him of his Wickedneſs, ſaying, What have I done?*

Shou'd we too, in like manner, go on to this Wickedneſs, *of not amending?* O Lord! terrible in Judgments, how ſhou'd not *this Sin be laid to our charge?* How muſt it force thee to deſtroy us, as not worthy any longer to live? For this, to all our other Iniquities, wou'd add *Ingratitude*; which argues a Temper incurable, and not to be wrought upon.

There is, plainly then, no avoiding the Judgments of God, which we are expos'd unto, but by the cleanſing ourſelves, every one, from the evil of his Ways, and by ſinning no more. May that Complaint never lie againſt us, which is made in the Prophet *Amos*, (iv. 11.) *Thou waſt as a Firebrand pluckt out of the Fire, yet haſt thou not return'd unto Me, ſaith the Lord.*

Prov. xiv. 34. As ſurely as *Righteouſneſs* is the *Exaltation* and *Safe-guard* of any *Nation*, ſo *Sin* is the *reproach and ruin of a People.* Sin, great and crying, is the cauſe of all the Judgments and Puniſhments which God, at any time, inflicts upon a Body of People. For howſoever, as to Private Perſons, *one* and the *ſame*, good and bad, *Event* ſeems *to happen alike unto all*, both good and bad, as if it were to give each of us a particular Aſſurance of a Judgment to come, when all thoſe Things will be amply rectify'd: Yet, as to *Nations*

* The very Growth of the Country.

and

and *People*, it is not so with them; they must be rewarded and punish'd in this World, according to the general *Quality*, and *Savour*, of their Behaviour before God; because, in the everlasting World, they are separated, the good from the bad, and they are no more a *People*, or a *Nation*.

It was *Sin* which began the Tragedy of all Evils unto Man. How presently did it change the Enjoyments of our first Parents, the pleasant and delicious *Paradise*, and all the sweet innocent Pleasures thereof, into a troublesome Scene of Calamity and Cares, a Vale of Misery and Sorrows? It next brought the universal Deluge upon the World: And has, ever since, been the occasion of every *National* and *Country-Calamity*, which has inflicted our Humane Race; and wou'd have been much oftner our Ruin, if the Prayers of the *Righteous*, whom *God takes a Pleasure* in, had not prevented, and disarm'd, at Times, the Fury of the incensed God, who was so wroth at us. May be, it was so now. — But, sure I am, that every single wicked Liver among us, is the greatest Enemy to the Happiness of this our Isle of *Ely*, and, I may add also, to the Island of *Great Britain*; and that He contributes to pull down the the necessarily undistinguishing Judgments of the Almighty God upon His own, and His Neighbour's Head. Let it never be said of any of us, after a sweeping Judgment, here lived such a one, who was the cause of his Country's Destruction, and the occasion of its becoming the Spoil of the Sea. Gen. vi. 5.

But I am ready to hope, we shall no longer continue Enemies to God, since we must, at the same time, be Enemies also to our worldly Interest, and general Prosperity.

If *our Ways do but please the Lord, how will He bless us exceedingly, and suffer not our Cattle to decrease!* There *won'd be no Decay in our Oxen*, nor Rott amongst our *Sheep*; but our *Corn*, and our *Cattle*, and our *Oil* †, would multiply, and bring us Riches in abundance. *The Waters wou'd sooner fail the Sea*, as *Isaiah* assures us, than the Goodness and Blessing of God wou'd be wanting to such a People. When He becomes the Keeper of the City, the Rock, and Defence of Places and Persons, *let the Sea roar, and the Floods make a noise*, yet *we shall be safe under His Wing, and Feathers*, who styles Himself a ready *Covert* and a *Refuge from the Storm*. He can effectually *rebuke the Sea*, in our ordinary care of Fencing, and prescribe to it immediately, *hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther*. xix. 4. Isa. iv. 6. xxv. 4.

† The Products of the Place; the famousest in *England* for *Oil* and *Oats*, exporting yearly about 1000 Tun of the former, and 5000 Last of the latter.

Very good, therefore, is the Advice of *Micah* (vii. 9.) *to cast our Sins into the Sea*, if we won'd make our *Baths* and *Barriers* ſufficiently ſtrong againſt it; *i. e.* remove our Sins far enough from us, to a Place, whither, I dare ſay, none of us (as well as we love them) will ever have a mind to follow, to the Depth of Sea.

Thus did *Jonas*, knowing his Treſpaſs, make a Sacrifice of himſelf, and that to ſave his Companions in Travel, and appeaſe the Sea, which rag'd upon his Account.

What can any of us, who either loves this his Country, or himſelf, or, which is moſt himſelf, his own Soul, do better, upon this occaſion of the Mercy of God, upon this ſolemn Seaſon of *Lent*, which ought, more particularly, to be ſet apart for the Examination of ourſelves, than moſt ſeriouſly to ſet about that holy Work, which will contribute to ſave our Lives from Deſtruction, both in this World, and that which is to come?

So let us ſearch out all our Ways, as forthwith to amend, and forſake every thing offenſive to our gracious *God* and *Saviour*. Let every one, in this momentous and retired Affair, confine himſelf to his own *Home*, where he may find Buſineſs enough to mourn in ſecret for his own Sins and Defects, and turn unto God, yet more dutifully in turning from them, and not any of us to cenſure and judge his Neighbour. So would there enſue a general Reformation, by every Perſon thus taking care to mend one.

How readily might the wicked, when he thinks on the *Sea*, find himſelf, upon Reflexion, to be like *the troubled Sea*, in the Alluſion of *Iſaiah*? And that there is no way to Peace and Calm in his Mind, but by flying unto God, and diſburthening before Him all his Guilt, about to ſink him with the Weight, like unto a Mill-ſtone about him, by ſincere Confeſſion, and by unfeigned Newneſs of Life.

Iſ. 50.

When he thinks again upon the *Wind*, to remember the Words of *Hoſea*, (viii. 7.) that he has hitherto, all this while, by his evil Deeds, *ſown the Wind, and reap'd the Whirlwind*. But that now he is reſolv'd, *the Time of his Life paſt ſhall ſuffice to have wrought* Wickedneſs, and that the future of it ſhall be devoted to do no more Iniquity, but to ſerve the Lord in all well-pleaſing.

Let me beſeech thee, O Sinner, not to let theſe good Reſolutions be blown away alſo, like the Wind, and come to nought! Oh! that I cou'd ſay any thing to engage thee to put them ſpeedily into execution, and deferr no longer, for thy dear Soul's ſake. I wou'd gladly *ſpend, and be ſpent* in any Importunity, I knew, wou'd prevail with thee, to be reconciled to God, and thy own Happineſs.

Recollect,

Recollect, what a ſenſible Emblem of the inviſible Power of God did the late Wind preſent unto thee? If the weak, thin, inviſible Air, put in motion by His Anger, can become ſo ſtrong ſometimes, that neither our Buildings upon Land, or Sea, can ſtand againſt it, think, what will be the *Fire, and Brimſtone, Storm, and terrible Tempeſt* of His Wrath in the World to come? And ſo, think, how it will fare with every one of ourſelves, as to eſcape, now immediately, each Man for his Life, in this our Day, which is the only Time poſſible to eſcape. Pſal. cxi. 6.

What an awful Senſe ſhou'd it beget in all our Minds, of the Power and Greatneſs of God, ſeeing it is undeniable, by ſuch Manifeſtations, he is ſo capable of being the beſt Friend, or worſt Enemy, as we regard to pleaſe or diſpleaſe Him? and, how that our Life, and Breath, and all we have, are in His immediate Hands to diſpoſe of? Ought not theſe Things to affect us with more than uſual Seriouſneſs, and caſt us, every one, into a Reſolution of laying up this kind Warning of God in our Hearts, and there keeping the Memorial of the 15th of *February*, and making uſe of that merciful Advertiſement, ſo wiſely, as to prevent a greater Deſtruction.

And now, I ſhou'd account it a ſingular Happineſs, if I cou'd haply prove inſtrumental in preſſing this Occaſion upon you, ſo as to obtain this *my Heart's Deſire, and Prayer unto God for you, That you ſin no more, leſt a worſe thing happen unto us.* Suffer but that one Argument drawn from your temporal Intereſt, (which never uſes to fail) to have its Weight, and I have my Wiſh.

If a greater or fiercer Danger (as is agreed on all Hands) has ſcarce befallen us in the Memory of Man, ſurely we ſhan't, we ought not to put it up without abundance of ſecret Thankſgiving unto God, our Defender. *O that Men wou'd, therefore, praiſe the Lord for His Goodneſs!* as the *Pſalm* exhorts, in this very Caſe. *What ſhall we do unto Thee, O Thou Preſerver of Men?* What, indeed, leſs, than to ſeek to praiſe, and pleaſe Him, in Righteouſneſs, and godly Living? *When Judgments are abroad in the Earth*, the Deſign of Heaven is, by them, to *learn* us *Righteouſneſs*: That our Hearts may melt at the Threatnings of God, and our Ears hear the Admonitions of our Peace, and our Eyes foreſee the Day of *our Viſitation*: When Judgments knock at other neighbouring Peoples Door, we can in no wiſe excuſe our Non-Attention. But when they knock at our *own* Door, by the viſible reſcuing Hand of God, we muſt be deaf, and loſt in the ſupineneſs of Stupidity, if we mind not the Call. — The Call is, that we no longer refuſe to hearken to the ſtill Voice of His Word. But, (as 'tis inſcribed in *Amos* v. 6.) *Seek the Lord, leſt He break out, like a Fire in the Houſe; ſeek Him, who calleth the Waters of the Sea, and poureth them out upon the Earth; the Lord is His Name.* Foraſmuch as (the *Wiſeman* enforces,) *He* evii. 31.

is

is Mighty to forgive; and to pour out Displeasure, as His Mercy is great, so is His Correction. Let us then, my Brethren dearly beloved, *thank the Lord for giving us Warning*, and pray unto Him in much Fervency, and with holy Hands, joining to our continual Prayers, continually encreasing Endeavours how to please Him more and more. He gives us to understand, by the devout *David, That He won't be long angry with a People that prayeth.* Wou'd any of you then be a Benefactor to our Country and Nation? Pray much, and live so as to be heard.

Psal. lxxx.

Some other Publick Blessings we might do well also to acknowledge; as that we have been exempted from the destroying *Plague*, which has rag'd in *Germany*, (by the Publick Accounts,) to the Loss of so many Lives; and from that other, which ranged among all sorts of *Cattle* in *Holland*; ours have also been free; and both by the distinguishing Favour of God.

May it be Thy good Pleasure, O Lord, still to go on to preserve us, and ours, and to give us Grace so to improve these Protections, as they may be an Earnest of future and greater ones!

The concluding Improvement I would make from the foregoing Discourse, is to exhort you all to look out, and provide, by this Warning, for *another, and better Country, whose Builder, and Maker, is God*, considering the Instability of this World's, and this Country's Possessions. But, did we take care to secure the Favour of God, even this Maritime, Embarked Country wou'd be built upon a *Rock*; and the *Wind, and the Rain, and the Floods*, shall *come up* in vain to *beat against* us; for we shou'd remain impregnable. This shou'd, moreover, teach us, not to over-value, nor, in the least, trust in our uncertain Possessions, liable, like their Owners, to so many Casualties. But, let us send our Effects before us, into the other World, by a good and charitable Use, and by a Christian Possession, *as if we possess'd 'em not*, for any other purpose, at least, than to do good thereby; that so, when they fail us, or we them, *we may be receiv'd up into everlasting Habitations.*

Matth. vii. 25.

Lastly, I beg a Minute's Patience more, whilst I press upon you from hence, to provide for the Coming of the Son of Man to Judgment. For S. *Luke* makes the *Sea and the Waves roaring, and Mens Hearts failing them*, to be a Signal thereof. And our Saviour, in S. *Matth.* xxiv. 38, *&c. As in the Days before the Flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in Marriage, until* Noah *enter'd into the Ark; and knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away: So shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be. Watch we all therefore, be we also ready; for in such an Hour, as we think not, the Son of Man cometh; we know not whether at Midnight, or Mid-day, or in the Morning.* But this we know, the longer His Patience has detain'd His Coming to general Judgment, the Argument gathers more Strength eve-

xxi. 25.

ry

ry Day, that it will be ſoon. The fearful Expectation may arrive e're to Morrow's Dawn, as to any private Perſon amongſt us; as it ſuddenly did to thoſe Perſons, who were *taken in this Storm, when we were left.* Up; Why tarrieſt thou? Let us all make haſte to eſcape the Wrath that is to come; and *linger* no longer in our Sins, leſt Evil overtake us, and we be conſumed. Where-ever we are, Danger enough will always ſurround on all Hands, and be ready to ſwallow us up, if we continue in Enmity with our God. This, this very preſent Opportunity may be the laſt we have to make our Peace with Him. 'He who fooliſhly neglects, or trifles away ſuch a mo-'mentous Opportunity (which may never be retriev'd) ſeems 'to me to be like one ſtanding upon the Shore, and ſeeing the 'Flood making haſte towards him apace; and that he has but 'a few Minutes to ſave himſelf; yet will lay himſelf down to 'ſleep, till the cruel Sea ruſh in upon him, and overwhelm him. But I hope better Things of you; that we will every Soul of us caſt off this fatal Security, and live like a People deliver'd; like a People, that has the Convictions of the *World to come* upon them; and the Impreſſions of the *Powers* thereof continually upon our Hearts, in all that we do, ſpeak, or think; as thoſe, who muſt give an Account accordingly. That ſo we may be found of our Lord and Saviour at His ſecond Coming, *without Spot or Blemiſh,* (2 Pet. iii. 14.) *and be counted worthy to eſcape all thoſe things which will come upon us, and to ſtand before the Son of Man.*

And now, how heartily do I wiſh, that the Words of the Wiſe Man (*Wiſd.* xvi. 6.) may, this Day, be verify'd upon us; *They were troubled for a ſmall Season, that they might be admoniſh'd, having a Sign of Salvation, to put them in remembrance of the Commandment of the Law; they were pricked,* (ver. 11.) *that they might remember Thy Words; and were quickly ſaved, that not falling into deep Forgetfulneſs, they might be continually mindful of God's Goodneſs.*

To the Great, Good, God Almighty, Powerful to ſave; Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed by us, and every thing that hath Breath, all poſſible Praiſe, Thankſgiving, and Glory, now and for evermore.

FINIS.

APPENDIX.

Being a Copy of the Monumental Inſcription in the Chancel of Wisbeech, *S.* Peter's *Church.*

TO the Immortal Praiſe of God Almighty, that ſaveth His People in all Adverſity, be it kept in perpetual Memory, that on the Feaſt of *All-Saints*, being the firſt of *Nov.* in the Year of our Lord 1613, late in the Night the Sea broke in, through the Violence of a North-Eaſt Wind meeting with the Spring-Tide, and overflow'd all Marſh-land, with this Town of *Wisbeech*, both on the North Side and the South, and almoſt the whole Hundred round about, to the great Danger of Men's Lives, and the Loſs of ſome, beſides the exceeding great Loſs which theſe Countries ſuſtained through the Breach of Banks, and Spoil of Corn, Cattle, or Houling, which could not be eſtimated.

The next Year following (that is to ſay) the Year of our Lord 1614, upon the Three and twentieth Day of *March*, this Country was again overflowed with the Freſh-Waters, which came down in ſo great Abundance through the extraordinary great Snows which fell that Year in *January* and *February*, that not only this Town, whereof the South Side only was loſt, but the greateſt Part of Grounds within South *Eaſtrent* in *Holland*, from *Spalding* to *Tidd S. Giles*, was drowned, and almoſt wholly loſt for all that Year. Moreover a great part of Marſh-land, from their Bank called *Edge*, between their Towns and the *Sea*, to their new Podyke, was loſt, through divers Breaches between *Salter's Load* and *Downham Bridge*. In Concluſion, many Towns in *Norfolk*, confining with Marſh-land, and moſt Parts of this whole Iſle of *Ely*.

D. O. M. S.

O fragum fucunda Domus, minimumque beata,
Si malè divinis non præmercetis Aquis.
Quas, tu cum ſedeas imis in Vallibus, ave
Quis probibere undas, ni Deus ipſe, poteſt?
Scilicet in fluctus nec quicquam tenditur agger,
Atque infida ſuo cedit arena mari.
Quod ſi te Impietas, Fraudes, Fœnus, Scortatio,
Commaculant, ab Aquis cur vetet iſta Deus?

3 MR 62

Poſuit Joſhua Blaxton in Theologia
Baccalaureus, & hujus Eccleſiæ
Dignus Vicarius.